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The 21st International Grassland Congress / 8th International Rangeland Congress took place in Hohhot, China from June 29 through July 5, 2008.

Proceedings edited by Organizing Committee of 2008 IGC/IRC Conference

Published by Guangdong People's Publishing House

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Rangeland management and livestock production system in Changthang ,Ladakh India

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Key words : livestock production ,management ,natural resources ,rangelands resources

Introduction The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region and Tibetan Plateau consist of more than 60 % rangeland ecosystems . These rangelands are supporting a large number of livestock industries in the region . Ladakh located in the Northern part of India and Changthang Plateau in the eastern part of Ladakh ,represent an important biogeographically province within the Indian trans-Himalyan region (Rodgers and Panwar 1988) . The area falls under one subdivision and most of the people are nomads . The economy of this region is totally dependent upon livestock production . Changthang region has very rich rangeland resources and rangeland management is still traditional . The present study is focused on the traditional management of rangelands and livestock production .

Study area The present study was conducted in two blocks of Changthang region of Ladakh with the help of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council ,Leh ,Ladakh ,India and ICIMODs Regional Rangeland Programme (RRP) , Kathmandu ,Nepal . Rangeland production systems in eastern Ladakh (Changthang) are spread over huge geographical areas , over 22 ,000 kms ,comprising two administrative blocks i .e . Nyoma and Durbook .

Traditional management of rangelands in the study areas The rangeland is studded with many places ,revered by the people . All the passes have a spot on the top known as 'Latos' and people flutter prayer flags there when they scale the top of the pass . All the pasture lands belong to the communities in that region and the pasture areas are socially divided into villages/ hamlets through social boundaries which are de-facto boundaries never to be trespassed . The trespasser and non-boundaries and non-conforming grazers are heavily penalized under the customary rules which used to be very strong and effective for proper use and management of pastures in ancient time . The communities migrate from pasture to pasture as per a fixed calendar which is adjustable to the demand of the situation . The communities always decide pasture related issues through village meetings and the decisions of the meetings are always respected and followed scrupulously by each and every member of the community . The flock size is also regulated under village laws . The village and monastery duties are equally binding on the communities . Each and every family has to obey the institution of the monastery and the village headman equally . Some families in every village are called 'Korbas' as they rear livestock for the monastery . The community exercise de-facto use rights on pastures ,but the pasture land belongs to the government as per the new of the country . Individual families are not allowed to claim any specific use right on any piece of communal pasture land .

Rangelands and Livestock Production Rangelands and livestock production are complementary to each other in the nomadic communities of high land livelihood systems . The nomadic economy is entirely dependent upon the livestock production and their livestock are dependent upon the rangelands as a source of feed and fodder . In this type of livestock production system the communities are migrating from one place to other place in search of resources according to the seasons along certain routes . Generally the herders have been following the rotational and definite pattern of seasonal migration . The stay in a particular place is most dependent upon the availability of resources such as water ,favorable weather ,and sufficient space for their animals . They have been managing rangelands for thousands of years in the HKH region and have a rich knowledge of indigenous rangeland management technologies . The migrating routes of the nomadic communities are fully dictated by the availability of resources .

Conclusions Rangelands in this region provide basic resources for provisions of life supporting activities . Prospects of pasture development in the Ladakh region are very bright ,but there is a need to document the traditional good practices and technologies of rangeland management and make them more meaningful for the local communities . Pashmina industry is one of the fastest growing industries in this region ; new technologies need to be introduced for further development of this industry . Fodder availability and pasture condition have always been matters of great concern for the scientists and researchers and others officials . In this region we need to stress the need for improvement of pasture production and management to assure nutritional security ,in order to optimize production from animals ,and we need to develop alternative resources for livelihoods . The rangelands are supposed to have an immense reserve of raw material to withdraw but there is a need for sustainable utilization of these natural resources .

Reference

Rodgers ,W .A . and Panwar ,H .S . ,1988 . Planning a protected area network for India . *Wildlife Institute of India , Deharadun* .